



# Town of Berwyn Heights

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**MAYOR**  
Amanda M. Dewey

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)  
Christopher S. Brittan Powell  
Jason W. Papanikolas  
Ethan D. Sweep

## Town Meeting Minutes October 14, 2020 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to comment by telephone and email.

### Call to Order 7:00 p.m.

Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Chris Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas, and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Interim Town Manager (ITM) Laura Allen, Town Clerk Kerstin Harper, Code Director Hollyce Goodwin, Historical Committee Chair Debby Steele Snyder, Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness Chair Mike Attick, Recreation Council President Susan Jones and Andre Plummer, Financial Service Program Manager of the Prince George's Economic Development Corporation.

### Pledge of Allegiance

#### 1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey announced that the Census deadline has been changed to October 15, and congratulated Berwyn Heights on a high response rate.

#### 2. Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Dewey requested to add a discussion item for moving the November Town meeting date. CM Sweep moved to approve the agenda, as amended. MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded. The amended agenda was approved 5 to 0.

#### 3. Discussion (added item)

Mayor Dewey explained that the November Town meeting date happens to fall on Veterans' Day when Town offices are closed. The Council is requested to set another date. The Council discussed alternate dates and agreed to hold the meeting on Tuesday, November 10.

#### 4. Approval of Minutes

MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved, and CM Sweep seconded to approve the August 31 worksession minutes. The minutes were approved 5 to 0. MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved, and CM Sweep seconded to approve the September 9 Town meeting minutes. The minutes were approved 5 to 0.

#### 5. Mayor's Report

Mayor Dewey reported on available voting options for the Presidential Election, including voting by absentee ballot, early voting, and voting on Election Day. Last Saturday, Prince George's County

Mayors held a joint voting event at the Board of Elections. The 2020 Census deadline is set for October 15. BHPD initiated a new pet registration program and continues to try new ways to stay in touch with the community during the pandemic, such as a virtual Coffee with a Cop. BHPD seeks information on the assault of an 8-year old girl that occurred yesterday at approximately 11:30 a.m. near the Town Center.

## **6. Department Reports**

CM Papanikolas moved, and CM Sweep seconded to accept the Department reports into the record. The motion passed 5 to 0.

## **7. Presentation (discussed out of order)**

***Prince George's Economic Development:*** Andre Plummer, Financial Services Program Manager for the PGC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) gave an overview of the Corporation. He said the EDC has 5 focus areas, each headed by dedicated staff. These include Economic Development, Business Development, Small Business Services, International Business Development and Marketing & Branding. The EDC's two top priorities are growing jobs for County residents and growing the County's commercial tax base. The EDC pursues a mix of strategies in furtherance of these goals:

- retain and grow existing County-based businesses;
- attract new development;
- attract grocery stores and fresh food vendors to address 'food deserts;'
- support transit-oriented development (around Metro stations);
- attract quality retail;
- grow and support technology startups (UMD innovation zone); and
- revitalization or redevelopment of older shopping centers.

Mr. Plummer described his responsibilities as Financial Services Manager, which center on facilitating the opening and operating of businesses in the County through tax incentives, projection of investment returns, and gap financing through loans and grants. The two most important tools for accomplishing this are the Economic Development Initiative Fund (EDI), which makes gap financing available to eligible applicants, and Enterprise Zones, which incentivize businesses to locate within a designated area through property and employee tax credits. Berwyn Heights has been encouraged to join the Enterprise Zone program and was provided a sample resolution that must be adopted to qualify.

Mr. Plummer responded to Councilmembers questions:

- Assistance to grocery stores is predicated on the provision of fresh fruit and produce within a designated 'food desert' while being financially viable. The EDC's Business Services Division manages this program and can provide more information.
- Berwyn Heights is advised to consider participating in the Enterprise Zone program to access marketing services that help the Town attract new businesses, including its industrial zone. The Revitalization Tax Credit program is another useful tool to attract business.
- The 2035 General Plan sets the parameters guiding future development in County and is a good place to start to understand how Berwyn Heights might fit into it in terms of attracting business. Manufacturing and construction businesses are particularly useful in generating economic growth. Similarly, professional and IT services tend to have a big economic multiplier effect.
- Berwyn Heights may benefit from the development that happens in the neighboring communities in attracting new businesses.
- Support from the community is vital when seeking to attract specific types businesses. Health care providers could be good for a community if they satisfy existing needs and circumstances.

- The EDC may be able to provide economic data that helps identify needs and unmet demand in an area (usually by Census Tract) for the purpose of attracting business. M-NCPPC's Planning Department can also provide such data.

In response to ITM Allen, Mr. Plummer explained that an Enterprise Zone designation is primarily a way to advertise the zone's availability as a business location. There is no obligation for a financial contribution. However, a participating municipality would forego the full property tax revenue from a new business. In the first year, a business would receive an 80% tax credit which then declines by 10% each successive year. The Town would reap the benefit of new investment, new jobs, and additional tax revenue. The EDC can provide examples of how the trade-off works but it would be difficult to predict to what degree Berwyn Heights would benefit because it depends on the project. Mr. Plummer said he has submitted the County's Enterprise Zone application to the Department of Commerce with a clause that would allow Berwyn Heights to join if it so decides.

### **Department Reports**

**Administration:** CM Papanikolas reported that the new Public Information Aide has started to work and will be able to take on the publication of the e-newsletter. Pepco has notified the Town Manager that its contractor will begin tree trimming starting next week. Administration is assisting Public Works in solving technical difficulties with its phone service.

**Town Manager's Report:** ITM Allen reported that the County has approved the Town's revised CARES Act application.

**Code Compliance:** CM Brittan Powell reported the Town lost 66 rental units that are now owner occupied. Mayor Dewey clarified that the Code monthly report has a category for lost rentals. This Code report shows that 66 rental units became owner occupied since 2014.

In response to CM Papanikolas, Code Director Goodwin explained provisional licenses are currently granted to rentals in good standing. When circumstances allow, on-site inspections will resume. If a rental home fails an inspection, the Code Department works with them to fix deficiencies, but ultimately would revoke the license if the deficiencies are not corrected.

**Parks, Recreation, Education & Civic Affairs:** MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced two surveys being conducted, one by WMATA on budget cuts and another by the Anacostia Watershed Society on residents' opinions about their environment. Both can be accessed from the Town website.

**Public Works:** CM Sweep reported that Pepco contractors will start trimming trees this week, that the street sweeper will be in Town, and that refuse collection has been postponed to Friday because of a holiday. He asked ITM Allen whether the leaf vacuum machine is ready for loose leaf collection. ITM Allen confirmed that the machine is ready, and collection will begin in November.

The Council briefly discussed information captured in monthly reports, generally, and food composting and recycling, in particular. Department reports will be discussed in detail at an upcoming meeting.

**Public Safety:** Mayor Dewey announced that Prince George's County remains in Phase II of reopening and is expected to remain so as COVID cases are on the rise. Residents are advised to follow CDC guidelines for celebrating Halloween, which discourage trick-or-treating. BHPD and the Code Department continue to work with Town businesses on compliance with COVID protocols and is initiating a pet registration program.

Mayor Dewey said she attended a Park & Planning budget hearing to advocate for continued funding to maintain recreational facilities. It provided an opportunity to discuss the basketball and tennis court on the school property, where regular maintenance is a concern.

## **8. Committee Reports**

***Education Advisory Committee:*** MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that information collected by the Committee about learning pods was published in the Bulletin and shared with the parent engagement assistants at BHES and Greenbelt Middle School, as well as with families that responded to the learning pod survey. Further, the BHEAC is working on developing a grant process for the Town's education grant funds and will seek the Council's input at a future worksession.

***Green Team:*** Mayor Dewey congratulated the Green Team on getting the Town *Sustainable Maryland* recertified for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. The Committee is also exploring the requirements to obtain Bee City, USA certification. A Bee City subcommittee will be set up, which any resident is welcome to join. The Green Team, with assistance from ITM Allen, is looking into applying for obtaining the services of a scientist through Thriving Earth Exchange. MPT Kulpa-Eddy added the Green Team is conducting an online litter survey to identify areas with litter problems and explore opinions on pollution.

***Historical Committee:*** Historical Committee Chair Debby Steele Snyder gave the report. She said the Committee continues to meet virtually on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month. In September the Committee elected its officers. She was elected chair, Lee Fuerst Vice Chair and Sharmila Bhatia Secretary. The Committee attended an open house of Sportland, the oldest house in Town. The Committee also started a series of virtual Wine & Cheese events, beginning with the BHHC's walking tour of Berwyn Heights.

***Neighborhood Watch/ Emergency Preparedness:*** MPT Kulpa-Eddy said the Committee plans to hold a virtual meeting on the first Wednesday of November. Those interested in participating should contact BHPD Clerk Muralles.

***Recreation Council:*** Recreation Council President Susan Jones gave the report. For Halloween, the Committee has planned an [Instagram costume contest](#) and a home decorating contest. Several homes have already been entered into the contest but many more have put up decorations. In November, the Recreation Council will host a virtual Trivia Night organized by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, and in December a virtual tree lighting and holiday concert is planned. Everyone is requested to send in ideas for events that can be done safely during the pandemic.

***Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness (discussed out of order):*** Mike Attick called to confirm that the NW/EP is planning to meet virtually starting in November. BHPD will facilitate the technical aspects of the meeting. Interested residents are requested to contact BHPD to participate.

## **9. Old Business**

***Beltway Widening DEIS comments:*** Mayor Dewey explained that the Council discussed the contents of a letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation opposing the proposed widening of the Beltway at previous worksessions. The Council's comments have been incorporated into a revised version, which the Council is requested to approve tonight. CM Sweep so moved. MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded. Mayor Dewey summarized the main points of the letter and asked if Councilmembers have further changes. MPT Kulpa-Eddy proposed to include WSSC rate increases likely to result from having to move water and sewer pipes. With this amendment, the letter was approved 5 to 0.

**CARES Act Business Relief Program approval:** Mayor Dewey said the Council discussed the Business Relief Program proposal at a previous worksession and requested some changes that were incorporated in the final version that is before the Council tonight. CM Papanikolas moved to approve the Business Relief Program. CM Brittan Powell seconded.

In response to questions, Code Director Goodwin said the program would be advertised to Berwyn Heights businesses through a mailed flyer and email blast, followed up with phone calls. The program was approved 5 to 0.

## **10. New Business**

**Ordinance 181-A – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading and Introduction of Budget Amendment to Purchase Server:** ITM Allen explained that the server replacement was budgeted in the FY 2020 budget but not executed because it continued to function. When the server crashed this September, it was patched up but needs to be replaced. As no money was budgeted for the server in this year’s budget, a budget amendment is required to fund the purchase.

In response to questions, ITM Allen said the money would be taken from the cable TV reserve, from which the purchase was originally funded. She has reached out to Greenbelt’s IT director to help evaluate different options for a new server, including a cloud-based version. Approval of a purchase would be made when proposals have been solicited.

Clerk Harper read the Ordinance. CM Sweep pointed out that the adoption date needs to be changed because the November Town meeting was moved. CM Papanikolas moved to introduce the Ordinance, as amended. CM Sweep seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

**Ordinance 181-B – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading and Introduction of Budget Amendment for Architectural Study:** ITM Allen explained that the contract for an architectural feasibility study of collocating the Police station and Town Hall was approved and funding was available in FY 2020. The funds were to be carried over into FY 2021 because the study would be completed in FY 2021. However, the Treasurer informed her that the Towns’ fiscal process does not allow it. As a result, the funds are not in the FY 2021 budget. Ordinance 181-B would appropriate \$40,000 from the General Fund balance to pay the architectural firm for the service they have performed.

Clerk Harper read the Ordinance. MPT Kulpa-Eddy moved, and CM Sweep seconded to approve the Ordinance. The motion passed 5 to 0.

## **11. Citizen Discussion**

James Wilkinson, Pontiac Street, commented by email that a stop sign is missing at the intersection of Seminole Street and 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.

Mike Attick, 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, commented by phone. He questioned spending \$40,000 on the architectural study as an earlier study had already found that there are pipes in the ground that limit any planned expansion of Town Hall. This study confirmed that finding. He said the entire Town Center lot is too small for moving the police department there and doubts anything will happen.

Mr. Attick further suggested the three Code officers spend more time in Town patrolling and checking for violations. Mayor Dewey replied that Code staff works in the Town Hall on a rotating basis to

minimize the chance of COVID infections. When not in the office, they work from home on issuing licenses and permits and other administrative tasks. The same holds true for administrative staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk